

For immediate release (11/17/2020)

Headline:

Camden City Schools identifies more students experiencing homelessness in recent years

Body:

[A new report](#) from Camden City Schools and Nemours Children’s Health System documents increases in the number of students the Camden City School District has identified as experiencing homelessness in recent years. Camden City Schools recognized over 100% more student homelessness across school years 2014-15 to 2018-19, the timeframe covered by the report. Increases corresponded to years in which the district changed how it engaged and supported students experiencing homelessness along with students impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017-18 transferring into the district. Most student homelessness was identified in just four district schools, though there are likely many students who experience homelessness but never come to the attention of teachers or staff. Most charter and renaissance schools in the city reported identifying relatively few students experiencing homelessness, in contrast.

When homelessness occurs, students are legally entitled to certain rights and services from public schools to make sure they have access to a free and appropriate education. Every school district is mandated to proactively seek out and identify students who experience homelessness so that they can extend these rights, but districts differ in how they attempt to engage students in homeless situations.

“We are always looking at how we are supporting students and families, finding new and better ways to reach out and serve,” said Sandra Torres Cintron, the Homeless Education Liaison at Camden City Schools and co-author of the report. “The data show that some specific changes in how we do things corresponded to identifying more students and supporting them when homelessness strikes, even when many of those students and families were relocating from natural disasters.”

Identified student homelessness was linked, on average, to more school absences and a lower likelihood of showing proficiency on standardized tests of math and language arts. “We know that homelessness, poverty, and the experiences that go along with it can get in the way of education,” said J. J. Cutuli, a senior research scientist at Nemours Children’s Health System and co-author of the report. “Housing programs that provide stability are important to prevent homelessness, but they are not the whole story. Even when homelessness occurs, there are ways we can support students and families to promote resilience.”

The report notes specific recommendations from school and district staff to further improve efforts to engage families when homelessness occurs. These include empowering teachers, staff, and others in the schools with information and resources, as well as a call to coordinate education and other systems outside the schools that support homeless families. “Homelessness is a complex social problem that requires a data-informed, coordinated, and holistic approach to support good outcomes,” said Aaron Truchil, Director of Analytics and Informatics at the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and report co-author.

“The data patterns in this report are another important step for innovating new approaches to supporting students and preparing for the future,” said John Iko, Senior Director of Strategic Analytics at the Camden City School District and report co-author. “While this report is about the years just before the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently preparing a follow-up to help guide our efforts in the short term and beyond as the economic impacts threaten to increase student homelessness after the eviction moratorium is lifted.”

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About Nemours Children's Health System

[Nemours](#) is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates two free-standing children's hospitals: Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Del., and Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando, Fla., along with outpatient facilities in five states, delivering pediatric primary, specialty and urgent care. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, [KidsHealth.org](#), and offers on-demand, online video patient visits through Nemours [CareConnect](#). Established as The Nemours Foundation through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy and prevention programs to families in the communities it serves.

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